

Melinda Bender
ITC 435 – Harmer
October 11, 2011

Chapter 12: THE USE OF WEB ANALYTICS IN THE DESIGN AND EVALUATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The use of web analytics is an important aspect when tracking data on the usage of distance education. It can trace the student's learning performance. Web analytics help to evaluate and explore how the student learns. Part of web analytics is Key Educational Requirements (KERs). It can help you to organize and set goals when creating a website. This allows you to determine what information the learner gains and with what effect. Depending on what the KER's are, it can have a large impact on the learner.

Web analytical providers can help to track basic information on a website such as the type of visitors, number of visits, navigation throughout the site, time spent on the site and demographics. Such information can be important when tailoring information or figuring out what is appealing to users. Key Performance Indicators can also help to explain what students have learned and the effects. Professionals can also be utilized to interpret analytical information.

There are free vendors on the internet to use in web analysis such as AW Stats, Analog, Google Analytics/Urchin, Yahoo/Index Tools, Woopra, Microsoft/Gatineau Project, and Omniture. In this article Google Analytics was used in a trial study among graduate students to determine what webpages students were interested in and at what point they would lose interest. Evaluating information from data sometimes is not overall accurate and all factors need to be taken into account. For example pathways or links may skew results showing that students may not be viewing at all the webpages. Slight changes in site navigation could make a difference. Problems encountered are that subgroups maybe hard to track, material may be challenging and students may spend additional time viewing certain pages.

Web analysis needs to keep developing and changing. Educators need to figure out how students process information in this type of format and build upon that. Data is essential when determining how to write curriculum for a distance education class. In order for educators to be successful we must be willing to communicate with others professionally the effective and ineffective aspects of teaching online.

Works Cited

Veletsianos, George. *Emerging Technologies in Distance Education*. Edmonton, AB: AU Press, Athabasca University, 2010. 231-247. eBook.